

Rev Ken Wratten
 September 29, 2019 – 19C Pentecost
 St. Luke's, Hollister

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

The revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

1 Tim 6:6-19

Be generous, ready to share, storing up a good foundation for the future

Luke 16:19-31

Do belongings demonstrate God's blessing? It's a test...

Amos: The revelry of the loungers shall pass away – a call to not be complacent when all is going well. Paul: Be ready to share, rich in good works – the life that really is life. Jesus: a parable about failure to care for others when we can.

A few years ago in San Jose I came to church one Friday night to prepare for a Saturday service. When I walked down the sidewalk along the back side of the building, I saw a man in his twenties whom I didn't recognize standing on the back patio, under the canopy. I stopped for a second, and then decided to keep walking to the back door of the office, to see what was going on.

When I came to the corner of the building, where I could see the whole patio, I saw a woman about the same age. They had their sleeping bags unrolled. The man asked if he should leave. I said, 'Are you two okay?' I thought to myself, 'where did THAT come from?' I thought I was going to say, 'What are you doing here?' But that is not what words came out.

My mind was spinning with thoughts. There is a preschool here; but it is evening, no kids or parents are around. Church members work here at night, but none were here. I couldn't let this to be a hangout for homeless. The man interrupted my thoughts. 'We are only passing through. We just need a place to sleep, only for tonight. If we need to go, we will.'

I said that this needs to be only tonight. I said they needed to leave this place clean. They needed to respect this property. They both thanked me. I asked if they would like something to drink. I got two cold soft drinks from our refrigerator.

Noon the next day I was back to set up for the service. There was no sign that they had been here. Nothing was left behind; not even the drink cans.

In today's Gospel lesson, we are not told how the rich man got to be rich, or what kind of a person he was before he was rich. But we are told what he did with his riches. The Pharisees considered wealth to be proof of a person's righteousness. If you were rich, God was blessing your good life. If you were poor, your sins have caught up with you... Jesus startled them with this story where the diseased beggar was rewarded and the rich man was punished. **The rich man did not go to Hades because he was wealthy, but**

because he refused to feed Lazarus, or to take him in, or at least provide some kind of care for him. The rich man was hard hearted in spite of his great blessings.

What kept the rich man out of heaven was not his wealth, but his arrogance and selfishness. **What matters to God is what we do with our blessings.** Do they only serve us, or do we share our blessings to help others.

Did I do the right thing with the couple who slept that night on the back patio at St Stephen's? If my first response to two people trying to get some sleep under a canopy is to drive them off, do I risk having the fate of the rich man when I stand before God some day? How can I honor the blessings God has poured on me?

Consider the blessing of this chapel and facility, and how that blessing is used. There are a few times it is quiet here; but not often... with two Sunday services and child care, preschool, Adult study groups, Pet Blessing, Halloween Party (coming up), Jose-Luis Orozco Concerts, Beer n Wine Stroll, Bike Rally, Memorial Garden, and Labyrinth.

This facility is made use of, and is important in many ways, to many people!

What if it is not the case that first we do good - and then God blesses us? What if **God blesses us to see how we handle the blessing?** What if the blessing is about equipping us with something that will make a difference to somebody else (not ourselves), and **God is watching to see what we will do with the gift?** The story of the rich man and the beggar seems to say that this is the case.

At our final judgment before God, **He will not ask how high we advanced in our job; how many friends we had on FB; what our body mass index was; or what score we got on our SATs. God will ask how openly did we share with people who needed something we had.**

>>Take an inventory of the blessings God has given you. In what ways can those blessings be used to help other people? How can your blessings make a statement about living faithfully by the values that God treasures.

May we manage our blessings in such a way that other people can see the difference we make; and that God can celebrate the difference we make.
Amen.